

ABLE-TOGETHER

SPRING 1999, Volume 6, Number 2

Magazine

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and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA



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Cover photograph: see featured interview, pages 18-22

UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY

The board of *ABLE-TOGETHER, Inc.* held its quarterly meeting on March 7th.

Organizational development and fundraising were discussed. A concert by the classical pianist Garrick Ohlsson, for the benefit of A-T and Axis Dance Company jointly, has been scheduled for October 3rd in San Francisco.

Welcome donations continue to come in from board members, subscribers to *A-T Magazine* and *Cafe A-T* attendees. Some donors are making regular contributions to A-T through the United Way.

A strategy for organizational development has been identified and the board continues actively to seek donors of grant-researching and grant-writing skills.

The editor of *New Mobility Magazine* wishes to reprint the Peter Hegedus editorial from the Summer 1998 issue of *A-T Magazine* on the subject of the "crip-as-hero" stereotype.

The board heard that *A-T Online's* email-list discussion group, *Disgaytalk* continues to be active, with between ten and twenty posts daily. The decision to invite participants to take turns as "list guest host" has been successful and will be continued.

The January and February *Cafe A-T* meetings (pp. 24-5) were lively and well-attended and the venue, *Buddies*, has proved popular. By providing a focus as to time and place, the Cafe fosters a distinct sense of our A-T community.

The Buddy Program continues to be offered on a "request" basis to disabled men wanting to meet someone with a similar disability.

—Mike Maurillo

ABLE TOGETHER

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HERE'S THE Question I Need Your Help With: Should I take my clothes off for the camera—and my legs, too? You see, it's a kind of package deal. Let me explain.

SAN FRANCISCO photographer Laurie Toby Edison is completing a new book of portrait nudes titled *Familiar Men*. Her goal is to challenge the commercialized stereotypes of our bodies that none of us can live up to. "My photographs," Edison has written, "show real men in their own environments: old, young, fat, thin, diverse in race, ability, ethnicity and class; familiar men in unarmored portraits."

DID YOU JUST READ "different in ability?" Does this mean Edison wants to include *us*? The answer is "yes." But do we want to be included in this way? Do I want to be included. I hope that by laying out some of my thoughts here, I'll be able to envision all of you as partners in an internal dialogue, one that might help me make up my mind. Some part of me, the essential "I," is bullying me. That voice insists on being heard and it's pissed. In truth, it's scared, a little

ABLE TOGETHER



from the
EDITOR

child you-won't-love-me-anymore kind of scared.

THAT BULLYING voice (let's just *call* him The Bully), is trying to convince me that if I agree to be photographed, I'll be unable to look at the photographs once they've been printed. It's a legitimate fear for some-

one who still has trouble merely looking at himself in a full-length mirror. What's more, I'm ambivalent about the Bully's frantic advice. He *is* a bully, but he's been in my corner all these years, after all, doing a pretty fair job of protecting me from the world's slings and arrows: "Don't look, don't look, don't look. If you don't look you won't know. If you don't know you can't get hurt." That's his message.

IT'S NOT FOOLPROOF. *Not Knowing* comes at a heavy cost. So I've begun to wonder if I need the Bully's protection any longer. What would happen if I thanked him for his loyal services and told him to get lost? What would happen if I *did* look?

FREED of the Bully's voice, could I imagine any advantage to releas-

ing those as-yet-imaginary photographs into my own field of vision and out into the world, where they might become chinks in the wall of not-knowing, letting in bits of light? When I allow myself to see and feel what I fear, the light does stream in. That's a truth I have learned through my association with *A-T*. I've begun, with your help, to look at things I've feared, including not only myself, but all of you. The result? I've never felt better, more optimistic and less darkly inward-looking. No, not perfect, not "cured" of dark thoughts, but vastly better. Thanks for reading these editorials I hope some of them have struck familiar chords and set you thinking, too. So there you have the personal angle.

CAN THERE BE a public angle to such apparently intimate feelings? Only if I take myself to be representative of a whole class of men whose lives resemble mine at least a bit. And, after all, I would not edit *A-T* if I did not believe that we are alike, at least sometimes, in some ways.

IF YOU AND I are alike and I take a chance, act the guinea pig for this experiment, might we not all benefit in the end—those of us who still balk before the mirror? What I want all of us to feel is the self-confidence that I felt when a man first told me he loved me. Maybe to get that good feeling we need to practice gazing at ourselves full-on until we find a way to be comfortable with what we see.

WILL I SAY YES? Stay tuned. I'll tell you in the next issue what I decide to do. And in the meantime, I invite your views.

—*Bob Guter*

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YOU are wanted at **Cafe A-T**



Ring of Fire: wash drawing by Steven Sickles, 1999

SOME NOTES FROM THE GYM

IN WHICH

STEVEN SICKLES,

OUR INTREPID CORRESPONDENT,

ARTIST, GYM BUNNY &

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST,

E-MAILS YOUR EDITOR

WITH A FURTHER EXAMINATION OF

WHO'S STARING BACK IN THE MIRROR

E-mail of 1/20/99

Dear Bobby,

(You'll regret that little slip for the rest of your life, won't you)

I forgot to tell you—there's a new guy at my gym who has a short right arm just like yours. Now I'm not the only queer (if you'll pardon the adjective) fish in the exercise pond. He's had to be even more creative than I, because he has less to work with, so his bravery and determination are arguably even greater than mine. (Actually, I don't think of myself as being brave or determined. More like stubborn, really.)

Anyway, what's truly odd is that neither of us has spoken to the other, although in the locker room we exchange knowing glances while pulling on our socks or tucking in our shirts. Isn't this funny? Like all adults, we look at one another but do not acknowledge the *thing*. This, despite the fact that,

like it or not, our situation makes us instant fraternity brothers.

I guess I resist because I'm afraid if I show him any kindness or interest, he might construe it as pity or crude curiosity. Or do I get absolved in advance from those sins because I'm a "brother?" Maybe I resist just because it's so damn predictable. I mean, everyone undoubtedly expects us to become buddies. If we were the only two black men in the gym we would naturally gravitate towards one another.

He seems nice (and his trainer is dreamy), so tomorrow, I'm just going to introduce myself. If nothing else, it will be nice not to endure the awkward moment when the new person extends his right hand and I have to offer my left. Maybe *that's* why I like *you* so much.

STEVIE (There! Now we're even.)

E-mail of 1/27/99

Dear B,

No, I did not introduce myself to the "one-armed man" (sounds like a *Fugitive* episode).

I think it's unfair of me to expect everyone at the gym to keep up with my ever-changing moods, so I've decided to adopt a distant and unfriendly attitude towards everybody. I'm sick of playing the inspirational amputee. It's harder and harder to smile moronically while I feel like annihilating the planet. I think it's going to be a whole lot easier to act surly to everyone—including the "less fortunate." This way I can be not only righteous but democratic.

STEVEN

E-mail of 1/27/99

BOBBIE JOE-

OK—ANOTHER Gym Story:
There is a young man at the gym (that's kind of like "Once upon a time," now that I think of it), very slender, very handsome, with a behind to make fags faint. Every day it is my wish that he will be dressed before I get to the locker room. Today my prayers went unheeded.

Rather than greeting him, as I always do (albeit brusquely, in my

new, distant mode), I kept silent—for fear of saying something that might make him uncomfortable or that I might later regret—and faced the tiled wall as we showered directly across from one another.

Alas, he noticed the unusual distance I had put between us, and as he lazily (ever so lazily) dried off his more attractive attributes, he asked, "You seem so depressed today. What would make you really happy?"

At last I looked him straight in the eye. "Apart from having all of my fingers back," I answered, "the one thing that would make me happiest today, right now, would be if you could dress just a little faster."

I have got to start showering at home . . .

S.

E-mail of 2/10/99

dear b.,

(i'm in an e.e. cummings kinda mood)

I should skip the gym tomorrow (*SKIP THE GYM?!*) and save my energy for the sketching group instead. This week's model is dreamy and besides, I did promise you some scribblings for the next issue of *Able-Together*. But last week was so tense and awkward . I

don't feel like facing *that* again. Carl, who runs the group, invited me to pose again. Being an exhibitionist, I found his request flattering and exciting. I don't spend all that time in the gym to have no one notice.

"But you'll have to take off your prosthesis," he insisted, "because when you wear it, you're not naked." I did take it off, but afterwards I told him I would never model again without it. If I'm going to be drawn, I want to be drawn intact. I still have not adjusted to representations of my hand as it looks now. That was not acceptable, he told me.

Well, I was outraged. I called him an insensitive, controlling queen and made a dramatic exit.

Now I don't know if I *can* go back.
STEVEN

E-mail of 3/15/99
Dear Editor Bob,

Seems like I couldn't stay angry forever. God knows I tried. So I went back last week. There was some bitterness between me and Carl—neither of us was sure just how much was forgiven or could be resurrected.

And I think I got hit with Divine

Retribution: the model was *nasty*. Well, actually, he did have a sweet face, but not only was he heavy into leather, he was hairy. I mean HAIRY, and you know my feelings on that subject. (OK, OK, so I'm hairist, what can I say?) All that wiry hair all over his back. Ick! But here's what I really don't get: He's having another tattoo done. They had to mow the lawn to be able to start it. It is a very complicated, colorful Celtic Cross. What is the point of this? Once his hair grows back, no one will be able to see the tattoo. It's very big. It has to cost hundreds of dollars.

People are silly. This is my learned and considered opinion.

STEVEN

E-mail of 3/24/99
HI, HONEY,
and Greetings from Asbury Park,
NJ! (Just kidding)

I haven't exactly been depressed lately, more like really, really cranky for months now. James, someone I met at Cafe A-T on Sunday, claims that I'm in the "Pissed" phase—says he remembers just what it feels like. The next step (according to James) is the "Fuck It All" phase.

Well, as entertaining and undoubtedly accurate as these somewhat

vague distinctions are, I think after three years I should have gone through all this shit!!!

What do you think? No, don't tell me.

But I have a plan. (Don't I always?) My problem, as I see it, is really very simple. It's the gym. It is *the* most frustrating thing I do all day. And I go there the very first thing in the morning. Bright, huh?

That means I carry my anger around all day, spitting venom at any poor soul who has the misfortune to cross my path. It's a good thing they have to put up with me at work because I'm the Office Crip, or I would have been sacked by now. Yesterday at a meeting I was asked when my part of a major project would be finished. "I really can't say," I answered, "since you keep me from work with these incessant meetings." When the guy sitting next to me remarked that my attitude was alienating everyone, I replied, "You're mistaken if you think that how I appear to any of you matters to me even slightly." Me at my haughty best. Rerunning that dialogue on my way home I was taken aback by my own unintentional irony: "How I *appear* to any of you . . ."

So what I've been doing for two

weeks now is going to the gym in the late afternoon. At least then, if I get depressed over what I can't do, I go straight home and have a martini. By the time I've finished a properly chilled adult beverage with a complementary pair of skewered vegetables, I am quite reasonable again.

Now I don't mean to suggest that this arrangement is perfect. It's still aggravating. Arguably it's even more irritating in one respect because of the multitude of very beautiful beefy boys I encounter at that hour who fill me with envy and lust (an unbeatable combo). But on the plus side, I have more energy and strength at 4PM than I do at 6AM, so my workouts are better. And there's always that martini, a vodka-scented carrot dangled in front of my nose, to get me through the enterprise . . .

By the way, I've got a date on Saturday. A new guy. He claims his butt is in such good shape I'll be able to bounce a quarter off it, which is not exactly what I had in mind. Will you be around? I'd love to stop by and drop off some drawings and just have a chance to see you before I meet Dan and test the tensile strength of his behind.

STEVE

(Someone told me it's more butch than "Steven," so I'm remembering the Steve Hunks of my youth, like

Steve Reeves, and trying it on for size.)

E-mail of 3/22/99

Date Post Mortem:

It's a good thing I got to see you on Saturday, because things went downhill in a hurry after that pleasure. Dan's estimation of his charms was way off the mark. Lie to me about anything, but not about your behind.

That disappointment set me to thinking. About the gym and everything else. Especially about the prosthesis. The pretty one I wear to cocktail parties and funerals. (The mourners should never look more pathetic than the corpse. Miss Manners says it's in bad taste.) You know, I'd been wearing it pretty much all the time. Then at Cafe A-T (does *everything* important in my life that does not happen at the gym happen at Cafe A-T ?), Peter, your estimable Able-Together director, remarked, "You know, that thing just makes you more handicapped than you already are." And, of course, he was right.

It's kind of like wearing a hoop skirt. It improves your figure by hiding your physical faults, but it's darn impractical if you want to maneuver through a doorway or sit in a chair. My cosmetic hand gets

in the way. It's not a part of me. One important place it's really useless is when I draw. Drawing is messy. It would be like wearing white evening gloves to clean the bathroom. What would be the point? So . . . I don't wear it so much anymore. If I frighten the horses, they'll just have to get over it.

And I think I'm sick of playing Mr. Aloof at the gym. It's exhausting. I've been thinking that I might really like to introduce myself to the "one-armed man" after all, but now that I work out late in the day I no longer see him. Opportunity lost.

What does all this mean? Beats me.

What do you think?

No, don't tell me.

Love,

Steven (Stevie? Steve? I'll figure it out. Promise.) 

Steven Sickles continues to attend his drawing group. The results have appeared on three Able-Together covers and have illustrated a number of features. Steven's article, Working it Out, appeared in the Spring 1998 Able-Together.

ARE WE THERE YET?

Bob Guter

In 1983, when I saw "The Year of Living Dangerously," I was shocked and profoundly moved by Linda Hunt's performance. Here was a very small actor in a very large role. Here was an artist who put differentness on the screen for us to admire. What's happened to us in the arts since then? Where are we now?

Have you seen "Affliction?" It's a fine movie, serious and full of the dark beauty of people struggling to figure out what's happened to their lives.

I saw it with two friends, one disabled, one not. Late in the film, the Nick Nolte character confers with his divorce lawyer. As their conference ends, the lawyer pulls away from his desk and you realize that he's using a power wheelchair. The moment is brief, with no special emphasis. Therein lies its significance.

As that scene quickly came and went I could feel surprise jolt all three of us. Outside the theater it was one of the first things we buzzed about: "Was there a meaning we didn't catch?" "Would the average moviegoer, not tuned into

disability, notice anything at all?" And maybe most important for us, "Was the actor disabled himself?"

Why was that last question the most important? Because it opens wide a controversy many of us are concerned and uneasy about in almost equal measure. We're eager to see ourselves—disabled, gay, disabled and gay—included in entertainment and the arts. We long to see our reality woven into the cloth of everybody else's reality. Why not, after all? The question turns out to be not so easily answered.

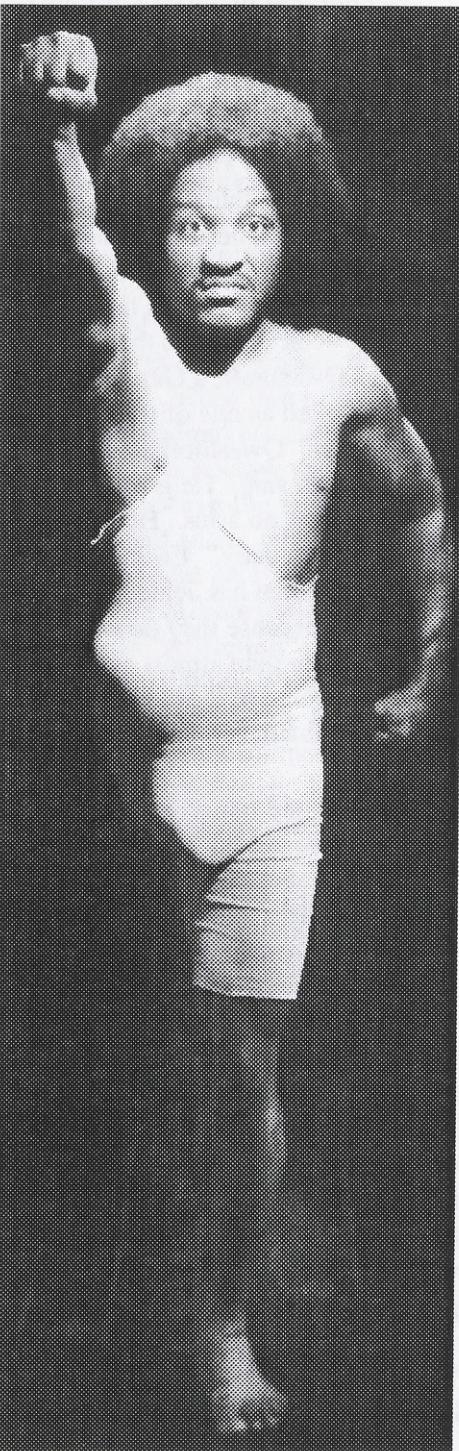
Let's begin by agreeing that we're talking about the performing arts. Are we out there, making it in front of the public? Not long ago I caught the multi-talented John Hockenberry executing wheelies onstage in a one-man-show adapt-

ed from his memoir, "Moving Violations." But that's an "easy," crip role, right? You sure don't see disabled dancers!

In The Bay Area, AXIS occupies the vanguard of a growing number of dance companies that integrate disabled and non-disabled dancers. You'll be amazed, gratified, moved, to see performers achieving, with excellence, something that runs directly counter to what's been deemed possible.

In the world of classical music a disability explosion seems underway. The eminent American conductor James DePriest has been walking onstage with his crutches for years. Not long ago, however, a young American Baritone, Kevin MacMillan, did the same in a semi-staged production of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," where he even managed to incorporate his sticks into some of the action. The audience loved it.

You're a disabled actor. Nobody's casting you. What do you do? GARY CORBIN (right) played all four characters in his own play, *Four One-legged Men*. After all, he figured, who was better qualified? The characters include a womanizer who loses a leg in a sexual escapade; a volatile young man with a troubled past; a gay man who names his prosthesis "Vontessa" and searches for love in the baths; and an aspiring dancer who loses a leg in Vietnam. Gary Corbin is the recipient of Individual Artist Awards from the NY State and Maryland Councils on the Arts.



The tenor Andrea Bocelli is blind; to date he has concentrated on recital performances. He vows to sing in fully-staged opera. Evelyn Glennie is a *deaf* virtuoso percussionist. Jeffrey Tate conducts the world's great orchestras sitting instead of standing, because of severe scoliosis. Perhaps the most stunning achievement is that of Thomas Qwasthoff, a German tenor already hailed as one of the era's great voices. Qwasthoff stands on a platform to sing. He is very short. He has no arms. He was a "Thalidomide baby." Each of these men and women has achieved rare distinction because they do what they do better than almost everyone else. And some of them are gay as well as disabled.

In dance and music, performers like these put the lie to old objections about disability and the performing arts, simply by virtue of their excellence. It is simple as that. Not so simple is the recreative art that influences us more than any other. That art is acting, especially movie acting, where the disability question moves in for its close-up in two frames: (1) Why isn't disability depicted on screen more often? and (2) When it is, why don't disabled actors get to play "themselves?"

We can gain some perspective by looking back at a couple of

notable films of the recent past (you probably have favorites of your own) then at some current ones. "Moonstruck" (1987), wonderfully offbeat, seriously funny, stars a glamorous Cher and a madly sexy Nicolas Cage—sexy "despite" (or maybe because of—depending on your perspective!) having only one hand. Disability was hardly the focus of the movie—you get the impression that Cage's character would have been a "misfit" even with two hands. Maybe that's why I can't remember anyone complaining that the role should have been given to a disabled actor (a one-handed actor?!). "My Left Foot" (1989) presented disability center-stage. Daniel Day-Lewis turned in a fully faceted performance as Christy Brown, an Irish writer with CP. In this case, maybe it was the utter seriousness of the film (Hollywood would have turned it into a weepy) and Day Lewis's committed performance that protected it from criticism. Whenever that film comes up in conversation with disabled friends, everybody gets kind of misty-eyed remembering its gut-level honesty; any question of "where's the disabled actor" seems to evaporate.

A couple of current films raise new aspects of the same old issues. "The Waterdance"

involves a trio of disabled characters. Not exactly mainstream appeal, you might think, and you'd be right. Getting it made was a long-shot, despite the fact that the film's screenwriter, Neal Jiminez, has been a wheelchair user since his twenties. "At First Sight" is a special case of a different kind, a love-story centered around the experience of a blind man who undergoes surgery that will allow him to see for the first time.

The film's romantic story line (he's supported by the love of a "good woman") makes it more understandable as a commercial property, but the fact that it's based on a true story by the immensely popular neurologist-author Oliver Sacks must have had a lot to do with it's getting made. And thereby hangs the irony of this little tale. The patient Sacks describes was not very "attractive" in mainstream terms. Over fifty and seriously overweight, he wasn't Hollywood's idea of a romantic lead, but as we know, Hollywood long ago perfected a foolproof method for correcting life's "unfortunate mistakes." *What's the problem? So we make a few minor cast changes. We cast Val Kilmer in the lead.* And so they did. Star power is all, is it not? Movies are fantasy machines, right?

Don't we disabled moviegoers want a few hours of fantasy fulfillment, too?

Well, do we? I guess it depends on who we are and what kinds of movies we want to see. I, for one, want the option of being able to see both serious and escapist films, and I don't understand why both genres can't feature disabled characters. Even more obvious, why can't filmmakers use disabled characters to occupy the middle ground between the stereotypical villains and saints whose shoes we have filled far too often? We need more ordinary roles (that lawyer in "Affliction") and larger ones, too. I think it's beginning to happen, but putting disabled characters onscreen meets only part of the challenge. How do we feel about disabled actors?

Not long ago I might have answered "what disabled actors?" but media exposure, some well-informed friends, and, most recently, a disabled actor who spoke up on *Disgaytalk*, Able-Together's online discussion group, have taught me otherwise. Still, the number of actors who are disabled—at least overtly disabled—is small, and Hollywood's allegiance to the star system remains large. In light of all these conditions, what

kinds of demands should disabled actors and disabled consumers of entertainment make?

Affirmative action? Quota systems? Disabled characters played only by actors who display the disability portrayed? I recoil from those ideas because of the nature of acting as an art. Acting is about illusion. Acting relies on an unwritten, unspoken contract between performer and audience to invite the play of imagination. Writers and directors and actors need every bit of creative license and leeway they can grab for themselves. Just last week I saw the American premiere of Tom Stoppard's play "Indian Ink." Should all the Indian characters in Stoppard's play have been played by actors who could trace their ancestry to the Indian subcontinent? In Act One an Indian character was portrayed, unconvincingly, by an African American actor; in Act Two an Indian actor gave an even more unconvincing portrayal of an Indian character. What I found myself longing for were actors who could meet the challenge of their roles regardless of cultural, racial, or ethnic identity. In the illusion game spread out on stage before me, I was prepared to meet any skilled performer at least halfway. It's precisely the need for excel-

lence that worries me about the demand that only disabled actors play disabled characters. Should a disabled actor have played Christy Brown in "My Left Foot?" We can't know if any disabled actor exists who could have matched the performance we ultimately got. Must Othello and Porgy and the Emperor Jones invariably be played by black actors? Would not logic insist, then, that comparable "white" roles be reserved for white actors, and on and on and on? If so, my own theater-going life would have been deprived of, among many others, a superlative black Joan of Arc, and a Mack the Knife from Puerto Rico. In fact, I wish I'd been alive to see Sarah Bernhardt play Hamlet (after one of her legs had been amputated, by the way!), perhaps the ultimate theatrical crossover performance—before Quentin Crisp depicted Elizabeth I, that is.

Although still too limited, Asian, Native American, and African American actors have all found enlarged opportunities in the last few decades. Disabled actors need to join their ranks. Let's remember, though, that acting will never be an equal-employment kind of profession. Recently on *Disgaytalk*, participants created a vivid exchange centered around disabili-

ty, actors, and dramatic representation. A disabled actor commented on the thorny issue of opportunity by observing that in casting, "everything matters," how tall you are, how much you weigh, how you walk. These factors bear added significance when the actor or character is disabled.

Everything must meet the director's conception of the part. If that sounds picky, our disabled actor noted, the entertainment industry is picky by definition. It's got to be.

The discussion reminded me of how much power the *representation* of our lives onscreen has on our own *perceptions* of our lives offscreen—not only our own perceptions but the perceptions of all the nondisabled who people our world. Not long ago, historically speaking, blacks, Jews and Asians on-screen were invariably villainous or perverted, comic or pathetic. In those rare instances when we appeared at all, we joined this crew of ready-made stock characters. It's impossible to do that to us with impunity any longer. We are not going to buy it, as the *Disgaytalk* exchange made clear.

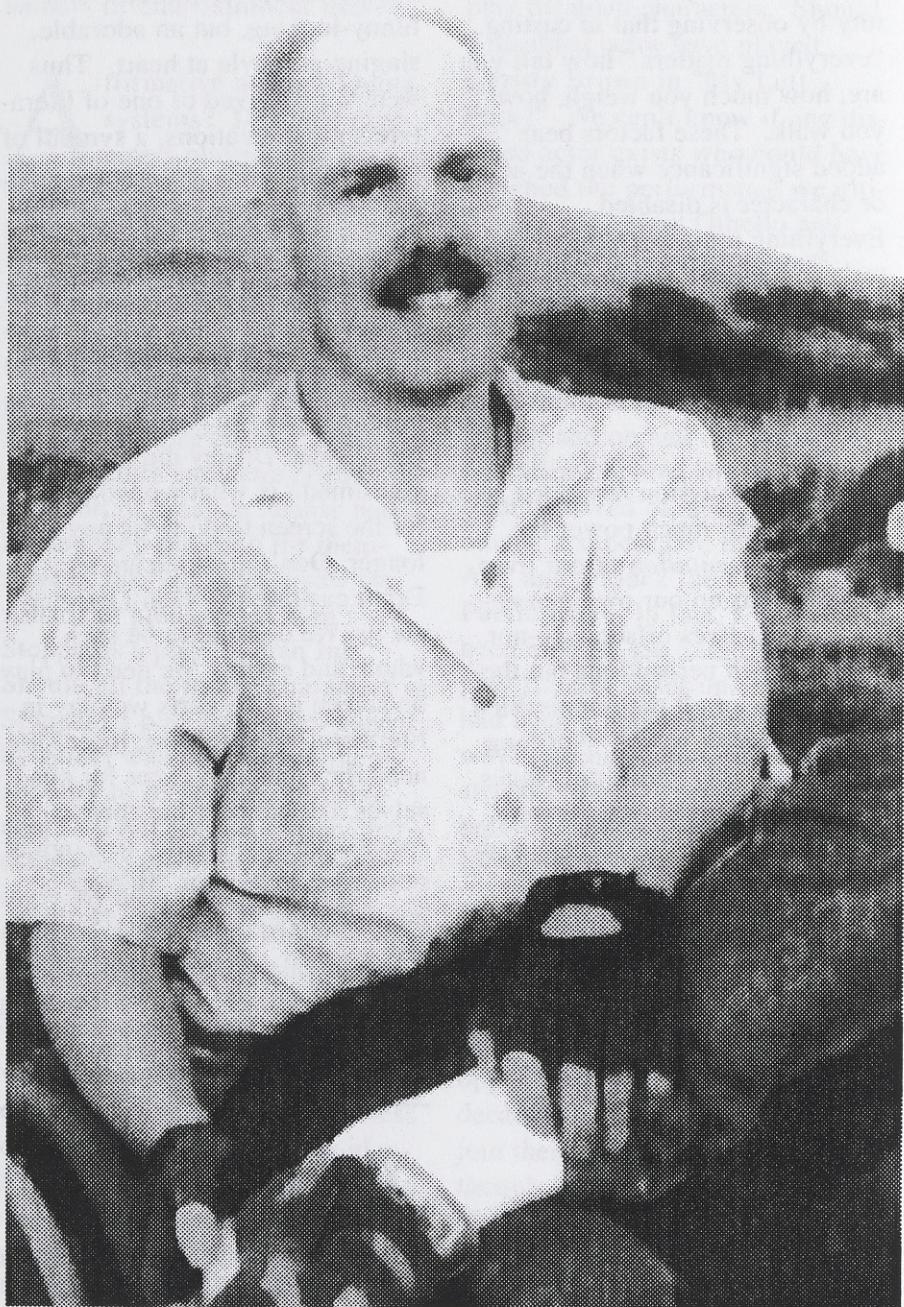
What happens, though, when an effort is made to redress the balance? How many of you shared my outrage when the animated

Hunchback of Notre Dame transformed Quasimodo into one more cuddly Disney creature, a little funny-looking, but an adorable, singing gargoyle at heart. Thus were we deprived of one of literature's great creations, a symbol of rage, oppression, and love denied, a character who embodies all the meanings of differentness we struggle with daily.

The moral of that outrageous act of artistic distortion sums up everything we've been looking at here. What Disney did to Quasimodo is what we won't suffer the screen to do to us any longer: Don't domesticate us. Don't castrate us. Don't eviscerate us. We demand to be seen whole and entire. We need to play on screen all the parts we play in life: hero, villain, lover, loser. We need the chance to cheer for ourselves, but we bear the corresponding responsibility to laugh at ourselves, to see our "flawed" humanity, body and soul. Nothing less will do.

Is the Silver Screen up to the challenge? Are we? 

My thinking about this subject was influenced by a spirited discussion of movies, disability, and disabled actors on Disgaytalk. Thanks to everyone who participated.



Walt Itrich at home on the North Dakota prairie

FROM GOLDEN PIPES TO DISABILITY RIGHTS

WITH A FEW DETOURS ALONG THE WAY

WALT ITRICH *takes* BOB GUTER

on a personal journey

I'm sitting in my office looking out on a cool, spring day in San Francisco. I'm happy to be where I am. The speaker phone is at my elbow and at the other end of the line is Walt Itrich. Walt's in his office, in Dickinson, North Dakota, where winter has not given up yet.

Walt sounds pretty pleased to be where he is right now, too, since he's just been named Citizen of the Year by the Dickinson Mayor's Committee for his disability rights advocacy.

I want to talk about Walt's book, I've Fallen and I Still Can't Get Up, but it feels like we ought to fill in some blanks before we get there.

BOB: I know you were a singer. Tell me about the kind of career you had and how it got started?

WALT: Oh yeah, I was the boy with the golden pipes. I always had a naturally good voice. At first I wanted to study classical voice. I realized there were some music scholarships available, and since everybody told me I was talented, it just seemed like I had it made.

B: But not the way you expected, as things turned out.

W: No, not at all. I was at school in Seattle in 1973 when I got recruited by a semiprofessional singing group called the Continental Singers, made up of high school and college students. (It was the model, by the way, for Up With People.) We were what's called a "swing choir." I sang tenor, but I could sing just about any part in a pinch.

B: Sounds like clean-cut, all-American boys and girls, right? Inspirational. Christian.

W: That was the point. Go on the road and evangelize with music. We were singing Fundamentalists; that was fine with me at the time, because I'd been raised that way. I spent a summer traveling with that group across the U.S. Then I was invited to join a similar but bona fide professional band, New Hope. All of a sudden I was part of the Big

Time—real money, recording contracts, agents. Oh—and New Hope traveled worldwide.

B: Sing the Gospel and See the World!

W: Well, not exactly . . . but pretty close! I'd been touring with New Hope for a couple of years when I began to notice hints of motor dysfunction, stuff like that, but you don't admit those possibilities when you're young. Anyhow, 1975 was when the doctors lowered the boom: MS, no doubts.

B: Did you continue touring?

W: I decided to take a year off and live in Holland, which I'd gotten to know because all of the New Hope bookings were handled in Rotterdam and I really loved it. At the end of that year I felt better, so I marched back into New Hope and told them they had to rehire me. And they did! I lasted until 1979. That's when I was forced to admit that I didn't have the necessary stamina anymore.

B: What were those years on the road like? What about the mixture of Christian Fundamentalism and your own sexual identity?

W: It's so hard to reconstruct.

You change without even knowing you're changing. One thing I *can* tell you, though, Christian Fundamentalists, at least the music groups I was involved with, are fertile soil for same-sex affections. You're at that age when you're searching for answers, everybody tends to be hyper-emotional and earnest and, phew! Things just happen. I knew in college I was attracted to men, but I resisted, because I was a "good little Christian." On tour I had my first "real" sexual experience, with an ordained Baptist minister who was a New Hope singer. A *Southern* Baptist minister. So I was learning all kinds of lessons. Hypocrisy included. But I had a lot of fun, too. One time a Danish groupie (his name was "Thorbjorn," can you believe) followed me across Denmark, from one concert to another! He was really very sweet and of course I was very flattered. That helped me figure out that my interest in guys was not just some stage I was going to outgrow.

B: Sounds like all sorts of feelings were converging at this point in your life, about religion, sex, career—and then MS gets added to the mix. Give me a brief account of what happened between leaving New Hope and ending up in North Dakota, because I'd like to focus for the rest

of the interview on your disability access work.

W: That's easy. I moved to Seattle, got a public relations job at a Lutheran college there, and set up my own small graphics design firm. But I still could not face giving up music, so at the same time I was trying to go solo, doing piano bar gigs. Not very satisfying. And, yeah—the MS was creeping up on me. My doctor suggested I go to Hawaii, which didn't work out. Then I trekked back to the mainland to try an experimental frozen plasma treatment at the University of Oregon. By that time the disease was gaining on me fast. In 1984, I can tell you the day: October 4!—I moved to North Dakota, because my family is here. So here I am, Dickinson, ND, population, 20,000.

B: Did you have a plan when you got to Dickinson?

W: Yes and no. Or more accurately, yes, but things went in a different direction. I enrolled in Dickinson State University here. Decided I wanted to study social sciences. By the time I'd settled into town and got to know the campus, the MS was making bad inroads again. By '88 I was the proud owner of my first wheelchair. Using a wheelchair

changed everything. All of a sudden I had this new, "sitting-down-and-rolling" perspective on life. I did not like it.

B: Because it made you feel more disabled?

W: No! It wasn't a matter of *feeling* disabled. I discovered that the environment disabled me because nobody gave a damn about accessibility. Things in town weren't accessible, the campus wasn't accessible—remember, this was before the Americans with Disabilities Act. I had to make a superhuman effort to get through a "normal" day. Or else I had to accept special favors, like the university moving classes to the one wholly accessible location on the entire campus. I started writing letters to the editor, started complaining to anybody who would listen. You might say I made a public nuisance of myself. Then in 1989 two things happened. The ADA finally got passed and a local reporter went on a tour of downtown and the campus with me and wrote an article about it. He was *not* disabled, but he used my old wheelchair. So there we were, two wheelchair guys, tooling all over the place. The story had an impact because what he saw shocked him. It opened some eyes.

B: Were you gaining a reputation as an advocate by this point?

W: More like "trouble-maker." This is a small town. People resent it if you rock the boat. And I had to *really* rock the boat to get any kind of action. Take my post office adventure. The post office was totally inaccessible. I was serving on the Mayor's Committee to assess accessibility. Well, the committee talked and talked and talked and the post office was *still* inaccessible. I finally went behind their back and called our North Dakota senator. Two weeks later construction started on a ramp. That did not make the committee happy. It's hard for people to learn hard lessons. We went through something similar with City Hall and I had to file a complaint with the Justice Department. Things are finally better. I'm now Chairman of the ADA advisory committee (no doubt because I made so much noise) and this summer we dedicate a totally accessible city hall. The thing that's made a big difference in attitudes is the annual ADA Festival we stage, with speakers, food, music, a real community event. We get about 350 people and it's put us on the map nationally. Working on it brings us together. I'm proud of that.

B: Have we filled in the blanks? Can we talk about your book now?

W: I thought you'd never ask! *I've Fallen and I Still Can't Get Up* is a landmark for me. I talk about myself in the prologue, but what's important are the down-to-earth stories I tell about 15 people from across the country and how their lives have been changed by their very different disabilities. There's no way I could have learned enough to write about them unless I'd lived aspects of their stories myself. I'm really pleased that this book will be published, because working does not get any easier. My legs are weaker and my hands get numb lately. Muscle spasms and the shakes are the latest delights. Oh yeah, and rigidity. And apart from the practical aspects, all this stuff is so damned unattractive! But I'm working on another book. Truth is, I started it long before *I've Fallen*. It's a political suspense novel. Now all I've got to do is finish it! But there's plenty of time to get things done out here on the lonesome prairie—if I decide to stay here. 

I've Fallen And I Still Can't Get Up will be released in July 2000 by Champion Press, Beverly Hills, CA

POEM BY CHRIS HEWITT

THE LIFTING TEAM

Recently in the hospital,
and in great pain
from broken bones
after an accident,
I had to be lifted:
bed to gurney, gurney to
x-ray table (brutally hard) table to chair.

Each time they sent for the Lifting Team:
Solomon, built like a football-player with
a wide smile, and Merwin, smaller, agile,
a savvy bird. Each time Solomon would say,
(seeing the tenseness of fear on my face),
“Don’t worry, you’ll be alright.”
Indeed, their arms held me in a firm cocoon,
I never felt the slightest pain.

When in death’s last delirium,
I shall call on the Lifting Team.
They will arrive as angels at my bedside,
and Solomon will say, “Don’t worry, you’ll be alright.”
And they will halt my ghastly nose-dive into hell,
and lift me up, up, high up
into the fields of stars.

Chris Hewitt's poems and translations have been published widely.
He is working on a memoir, *Brittle Bones*.

NEWSMAKING

by Peter Geiger

A-T's NONPUBLISHING PROGRAMS CREATE COMMUNITY BOTH ONLINE AND OFF



Ordinary Men

When A-T, Inc. board president Blaine Waterman first conceived of A-T Online's *Disgaytalk* email-based discussion group, he thought it would be a forum for generating discussion on men's disability stuff. Serious stuff like being rejected by a date or partner because of some aspect of your disability. This expectation has been fulfilled.

And something else is happening on *Disgaytalk*: a background hum of everyday chatter, exchange of information, been to a great show, had the 'flu...nonserious, non-disability-related chat. Good hangin' out. The buzz, the balance, and the hangin' are similar at the Sunday afternoon *Cafe A-T* get-togethers in San Francisco.



With a Place of Our Own

What's wrong with this picture? Nothing—unless you and I are surprised that so many men with so many different disabilities can behave and sound like just so many ordinary men with ordinary experiences and concerns that are common to all of us, disabled or not.

I came to A-T because it's somewhere I would be "pre-approved." Men come to A-T because they want to put ordinariness back into disability. Yes, it's a highly significant part of me/no, it makes no difference to who I am. What's great about the *Cafe* is its visibility: boyz pass by, look through the plate glass, see the buzz, feel the vibe, get the perspective. It's by such moments that we bridge the gaps man-to-man.

You
are cordially invited to
the remaining 1999
ABLE-TOGETHER
Sunday Cafe Socials

Sun Jan 24th at 2pm

Sun Jun 20th at 2pm

Sun Feb 21st at 2pm

Sun Jul 18th at 2pm

Sun Mar 21st at 2pm

Sun Aug 22nd at 2pm

Sun Apr 18th at 2pm

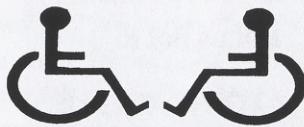
Sun Sep 19th at 2pm

Sun May 23rd at 2pm

Sun Oct 24th at 2pm

*In SF's gay Upper Market,
easily reached by BART/MUNI.*

*Join a bunch of good men like you
Friendly, w'chair accessible location*



**BE SEEN HAVING A GOOD TIME
WITH OTHER DISABLED/NONDISABLED MEN!!**

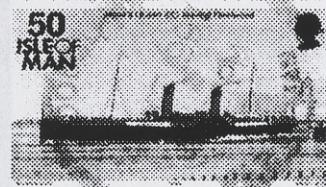
**ABLE-TOGETHER
POB 460053, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94146, USA**

***RSVP to: Voice Mail—US: 415 522 9091**

***RSVP to: e-mail: ABLTOGETHR@aol.com**

***dates and venues subject to confirmation: please leave your
telephone number on the voice-mail so we can call you back**

B A C K TALK



LETTERS

VOICE-MAIL E-MAIL

ABLE-TOGETHER
may print extracts from
your communications,
identified by
your initials and state,
unless you specifically
ask us not to

HOW TO REACH US

E-MAIL:

ABLTOGETHR@aol.com

VOICE MAIL/US:

415 522 9091

VOICE MAIL/UK:

01453 832782

LETTER POST:

ABLE-TOGETHER

P. O. Box 460053

San Francisco

CA 94146 USA

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following letter was written by A-T's Roving Ambassador of Goodwill, Dan Pierce. Dan keeps us guessing—we never know where he's going to show up next. It could be your town.*

Smile back if you see a big friendly guy with a big friendly grin rolling toward you. Dan invites you all to get in touch with him by regular or E-mail.

WORKING TO MAKE ABLE-TOGETHER WORK

In the last few months I've been really pleased by the connections I've made with A-T subscribers and staff—including a great afternoon at Cafe A-T in San Francisco. Once in a while I hear people complain about A-T: "Why can't they do this?" or "Why can't they give us more of that?" After a lot of thought, I've finally come up with a response that satisfies me:

"What have you done to insure that A-T succeeds?" I know that I've been the beneficiary of countless hours of hard work and dedication on the part of Peter, Bob, Steven, Michael, and probably others I don't even know. I appreciate their work, but I realize that if I want more from A-T or if I want it to continue, it's up to me to make sure that it happens.

When I began to think about why more men don't find their way to A-T or why a lot of subscribers don't participate very much, I began to look for parallels with my own life. Fifteen years ago I saw myself as a poor, crippled faggot—poor as in "poor me," and poor as in perpetually-broke. As for the "cripple" part, well that was one level lower on the food chain than "disabled." And if that wasn't enough, I

ABLE-TOGETHER, POB 460053, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94146, USA
Voicemail US: 415-522 9091/email: ABLTOGETHR@aol.com/Voicemail UK: 01453 832782

ABLE-TOGETHER Magazine, an international quarterly for bisexual and gay men with and without disabilities, is published by *ABLE-TOGETHER, Inc.*, a California public benefit corporation exempt from federal taxes under IRS Section 501(c)3. Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall issues appear in January, April, July and October. **A-T Magazine** has subscribers in the US, and in Canada, the UK, and across the globe. You can buy the *Magazine* at certain gay/progressive bookstores in the US and in the UK.

A-T Magazine editor Bob Guter was born with multiple birth defects and has been an amputee since age six. Bob's inquiry into men's lives seeks to bridge the gaps which our socialization has created to separate disabled from nondisabled. Looking at the interface of disability and nondisability from *both* viewpoints, Bob's perspective emphasizes the generation of positive feeling and experience in men's relationships.

A-T Magazine's fifty-two page *Spring 1999* issue looks at disability in the arts and at disability's place in the gay man's gym; a poem by Chris Hewitt is featured, along with readers' letters and email, and twenty pages of subscribers' personal contact ads are listed. **A-T Magazine** IS its subscribers—who contribute articles, poems, interviews, bulletin-board notices, letters and art to the *Magazine*, and help with outreach locally.

A-T Magazine applies all subscription, sales and donation revenues to production, advertising and outreach costs. *ABLE-TOGETHER's* international outreach program includes sending informational materials and flyers to independent living centers and to the disabled students' programs and the gay and lesbian students' associations of colleges in the US and Canada; *A-T* has advertised in US regional gay newspapers and nationally in publications such as *New Mobility*, *The Disability Rag* and *Advocate Classifieds*; in Canada in *Disability Today*; and in the newsletter of the Spinal Injuries Association and in *Disability Now* and *Gay Times* in the UK. *A-T's* home on the Internet is: <http://www.well.com/user/blaine/abletog.html>

A-T Magazine yearly subscribers *only* may submit a personal contact ad for publication for as long as the subscription is active; changes and updates to ads are encouraged; ads may be box#-coded for privacy; **A-T Magazine** does not profit from forwarding replies to coded ads, but we ask that responders reimburse our forwarding postage costs; we reserve the right to edit ads for length and content.

A-T Magazine costs \$30US/£18.50/C\$42.50/A\$44.50/NZ\$53.50 (full-rate subscribers may pay by your personal check drawn in your domestic currency) for a year's subscription of four issues, inclusive of a personal contact ad listing at no additional charge; for men with low income this is reduced to \$15US (US \$ only, please) or \$20US if you send us a photo to be scanned and published with your ad; or you may purchase a single issue for \$5US (US \$ only, please). **A-T Magazine** goes by airmail to overseas subscribers.

A-T Magazine is news: *A-T* has received mention in *New Mobility*, in the newsletters of the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights and of the Boston Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities, as well as in gay newspapers and magazines such as *Mandate*, and, locally, the *San Francisco Bay Area Reporter* and *All Points North* in the UK. Organizational subscribers include the World Institute on Disability in Oakland, California, the Homodok Archives in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society in San Francisco, Ca.

SUBSCRIPTION AND PERSONAL CONTACT AD REQUEST INFORMATION

When you decide to become a full-year subscriber to A-T you have a choice of starting your subscription with either the **currently available** issue or the **next** issue. Because your ad (if you submit one) will **only** be published **whilst your subscription is active**, this choice affects the **number of times your ad can appear**! This means that if you want your ad to be published four times during your first year with A-T you must specify that you want your subscription to start with the **next issue** and your subscription payment and ad must be received by us before the deadline.

DEADLINES: ABLE-TOGETHER needs your ad copy by 5th December for Winter issue, 5th March for Spring issue, 5th June for Summer issue, and 5th September for Fall issue. New, renewed or changed ads reaching us after these dates are not guaranteed to appear in the issue published the following month. We will try, but...

UPGRADE OPTION: If you buy a single copy of the current issue of A-T for \$5US you may upgrade to a full-year subscription by payment (within three months) of the balance of \$25US/£15/C\$35.50/A\$37/NZ\$44 (full subscribers), or \$10US—low income (US \$ only, please); an upgrade form will be sent to you with your first A-T.

to ABLE-TOGETHER, POB 460053, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94146, USA

- PERSONAL CONTACT AD REQUEST FORM -

PLEASE PUBLISH THE FOLLOWING AD WHILE MY SUBSCRIPTION REMAINS ACTIVE:

Signed _____ *Date* _____

I would like my ad to be: **box#-coded** **uncoded** (please check one)
(we recommend your ad be box#-coded unless you have a P O Box address)

Text of my ad: (include name/address/phone # as you want it to appear in the ad)

Attachment to the affidavit

to ABLE-TOGETHER, POB 460053, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94146, USA

- SUBSCRIPTION / ORDER FORM

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM -

Name: _____ Date _____
Address: _____

Phone #: _____

I would like a YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION (inclusive of personal ad)

starting with ____ the current issue / the next issue (specify issue date)

I enclose _____ \$30US/ £18.50/ C\$42.50/ A\$44.50/ NZ\$53.50, or _____ \$15US low income,
or _____ \$20US with photo to scan

Please send me a **SINGLE ISSUE** of the newsletter. I enclose \$5 US

SPRING 1999 • 1

(please check as applicable)

was gay, too. I was afraid to come out to my family and friends because I feared that their love, which I held so dear, would vanish. When, somehow, I was able to take a stand on who I was and who I wanted to become, I discovered that I'd changed what my own future held.

In just the same way, I believe that we A-T subscribers can work for ourselves if we put in some work to insure A-T's success. Up to now, the enormous job of publishing the Magazine, answering inquiries, running quarterly board meetings, managing outreach efforts like Cafe A-T and the Buddy Program, and moderating Disgaytalk online, has been left to a handful of loyal volunteers (You do know, I hope, that nobody at A-T gets paid for this fulltime job!). But here's what's exciting: Just think what we could accomplish if each of us contributed some time, skill, service, or a few extra dollars to this endeavor that means so much to us.

Dan Pierce

MSC 6756, POB 2428, 358-D West Nine Mile Rd. Pensacola, FL 32513

DanPierce@abac.com

Peter Geiger writes: The other day I called a subscriber in Florida.

"Hello, this is Peter from A-T," I began. "Oh," said the unfamiliar voice, "you must want Dan, hold on." I laughed to myself, Dan, realizing that you are truly everywhere! I cannot think of anyone else who has made such good use of ABLE-TOGETHER as you have. You have subscribed to the magazine, advertised and renewed almost since the beginning. You have replied to ads and made friends and good buddies all over the continental US—and now your RV has a driveway to park in just about everywhere you go on your extended trip.

Dan thank you for your appreciation of what we do at A-T. You are right-on in your letter. With four programs, our organization has now grown to the point where we need to implement radical changes. A-T is unique, and too important now to be left to "a handful of loyal volunteers." We do need help from all of you to realize the vision that we share, which is of a fully-funded, self-sustaining nonprofit organization with full-time, paid program coordinators, a Cafe A-T in every major city, a link to the Buddy Program in every ILC and spinal injuries unit—and, most of all, a thriving vibrant community, Dan, of men like YOU.

Guys, you can ALL help make it happen. You—or your best friend—may have a much-needed skill, like grantwriting or fundraising. You could help host Disgaytalk online or start a Cafe A-T. And yes, your donations help too. Spread the word, Guys, and have fun spreading it.

DISGAYTALK

I want to thank you and others responsible for the creation/maintenance of Disgaytalk. It has helped me put a difficult puzzle piece into the right slot as far as myself is concerned. I'm 46 yo, gay, and disabled with Multiple Sclerosis. I have not yet got up the courage to introduce myself to the list, but I will eventually. I truly enjoy reading all the posts with everyone's insightfulness, humor and camaraderie. Anyway, it has gifted me at this time with a meaningful place in my life.

DD, Indiana, via email

The Disgaytalk list has a life of its own. Some men, like you, prefer to be an "active listener" whereas others jump in with daily postings to the list. Disgaytalk is like a drop-in Cafe, with always a seat for you at a friendly table. Glad to hear that joining the list has helped you solve a "puzzle piece." Thank you for the gift of your feedback.

BUDDY PROGRAM

I just finished a conversation with my new Buddy...we had a very nice chat...he seems to be a very nice guy. It was great to speak of my injury within a sexual context. I feel somewhat energized by the experience. I do plan on calling him in the future. Even though he is in a different state he does have some familiarity with Massachusetts, which helps. Thank you for finding him for me.

KC, Massachusetts, via email

It is good to hear that being in a different state is no barrier to a good Buddy connection. Knowing this helps energize us—Thank you!

LOOKING FOR A SPECIAL PERSON

I'm a prisoner with a degenerative spine condition (40 years old, 6', 185lbs., blue eyes and brown hair) looking for friends, perhaps that special person. A lot of prisoners are out to scam, so I'm sending a copy of my medical summary so you know I'm for real. I'm in here because I'm guilty, but I'm a Christian and I struggle spiritually. Thanks. God Bless.

*Michael David Stiles #648558
Unit 3060, FM 3514, Beaumont, TX 77705*

Michael, thanks for writing with such honesty. We hope someone will see your letter in this issue and decide to write. ☮

A GUIDE TO CONTACT AD LISTINGS

HOW TO REPLY TO A CODED AD: Put your letter in an envelope, seal it, and put the A-T code # of the advertiser you are replying to in the top right corner of the envelope; if you know your A-T code #, put this (or your initials) in the bottom left corner; **do not put your return address on this envelope**; put this envelope, together with the correct reimbursement for forwarding, please, (see below) in another envelope. This outer envelope should have your return address: seal, address to A-T and mail! You may respond to as many coded ads as you wish, and put all the code-numbered envelopes in the one outer envelope to mail to us.

CONTENT: We believe the best kind of ad is the one that gives the reader the most accurate idea of who you are. We therefore encourage ad length (but reserve the right to edit) and accurate statements of personal statistics such as age and weight. Bear in mind that A-T readers are likely to want to know whether you are disabled or nondisabled, so please include this information. Try to be as detailed as you can about yourself and your way of being and presentation in the world, because it very greatly helps both you and potential responders if they can gain a reasonable picture of you from the ad. *We encourage changes and updates to ads!*

EDITING POLICY: Although ABLE-TOGETHER strives without judgment to encourage honest self-expression we are aware that many of our subscribers may feel depersonalized and objectified in response to certain personal contact ad material. Because of the importance A-T attaches to avoiding objectification and depersonalization in interpersonal relations, we may edit personal contact ads which seem to us to contain sexually overly explicit or overly fetishistic material.

DEADLINES: ABLE-TOGETHER needs your ad copy by 5th March for Spring issue, 5th June for Summer issue, 5th September for Fall issue and 5th December for Winter issue. New, renewed or changed ads reaching us after these dates are not guaranteed to appear in the issue published at the beginning of the next month.

POSTAGE: ABLE-TOGETHER does not seek to profit from forwarding replies to coded contact ads but we do ask that you send us full reimbursement for our postage costs in forwarding your reply to the advertiser:

- for US responses to US advertisers, this is a 32ct stamp;
- for US responses to Canada, this is a 46ct stamp;
- for US responses to advertisers outside the US or Canada, this is a \$1 stamp;
- for overseas responders who do not have US stamps and wish to send a \$1 bill, this will cover three replies within the US or two to Canada or one elsewhere; but please note that these rates are for minimum-weight letters; heavier items cost more to send, and when in doubt, please check at the post office.

PAYMENT: Remittance of forwarding costs may be made to ABLE-TOGETHER in valid US postage stamps, in currency, or by personal check or money order drawn in US Dollars. Please, no international reply coupons or foreign currency checks for this purpose. All payments are sent to us at sender's risk. A-T does not accept responsibility for materials sent to us to be forwarded, and we reserve the right to destroy materials not accompanied by adequate reimbursement for forwarding costs. ☺

PERSONAL CONTACTS INITIATED THROUGH ABLE-TOGETHER CONTACT AD LISTINGS ARE DONE SO ENTIRELY AT THE RISK AND ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PERSONS CONCERNED: WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE DOING WHAT YOU WANT TO BE DOING, AND WITH THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE DOING IT WITH; IF YOU DECIDE TO BE SEXUAL WITH SOMEONE YOU ARE VERY STRONGLY URGED FIRST TO CALL YOUR LOCAL AIDS/STD HOTLINE FOR ADVICE.

For the first time in this issue the A-T personal contact ads are divided into two sections. The BUDDY section is for advertisers who are not seeking contacts of a romantic or sexual nature. Respondents looking for contact that will lead to sex or romance should reply only to ads in the MORE THAN A BUDDY section.



INDIANA/UTAH. 46 yo male, gay, single (since '90 when partner died), and disabled since '93 with Multiple Sclerosis. I am at a stage in my life where I am trying to put a difficult puzzle piece into the right slot, being disabled in the gay community. Discovering A-T was the right start, and the possibilities of developing friendships, support and inclusion within its community would help me finally fit that out of place puzzle piece. Would greatly appreciate hearing from anyone for possible friendship. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1849, or E-mail Denisgd@aol.com*

WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS. GWM, 41 years old learning to come to terms with a congenital brain aneurysm—an AVM—which has left me without the full use of my left leg and essentially no use of my left arm and hand. I'm working with therapists and exercising with the hope to regain the use of most of my body. I also have to deal with panic attacks and the threat of seizures along with an inability to be aware of that which is on my left side (this is a cognitive not optical issue). All of these issues along with the fact that I must live back with my parents make thoughts of intimacy damn near impossible. If there is another gay man out there who may be dealing with any of these problems, I would love to hear from him and hear what he has been through. Until this hit me I was working as a Graphic

Designer—an occupation which paid the rent and allowed for my frequent trips to Tower Records and an occasional visit to Italy. I'm looking for someone to talk about my injury experiences with and would like it if this developed into a friendship. I would love to be in a position to feel comfortable seeking someone for an intimate relationship at some point down the road, but not now. For now I am so unaware of my own physical experiences that sharing them with others is totally foreign to me. I also long for the day when I can hug a man with both arms and feel him with both hands. I've been told this will never happen by most of my doctors and therapists. I don't want to accept all of the "never's thrown at me. Can someone be the proof of a light at the end of the tunnel for me? Or at the very least maybe I could work towards the light together with someone else—while you do the same struggle of your own. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1836, or E-mail: KURTC@ibm.net*

**ABLE
TOGETHER**
PERSONALS

BUDDIES

MORE THAN

BUDDIES

CA



*Seeking
MORE THAN A BUDDY*

MY NAME IS MICHAEL. I am 45, 6', 210#. I am a right AK amputee. I have a lot of interests, including music, (alternative rock, classical, jazz, world), reading (novels and newspapers mostly), travel, eating out, movies, concerts and theater. I am looking to meet able-bodied men who are 37—48 years old, preferably, and who live in the Southern California area (or visit here regularly) for friendship and perhaps romance. My friends describe me as a fun-loving, interesting and sincere person and I am looking for same. If my being an amputee is a turn-on for you that is just fine by me but I would frankly prefer not to be contacted by amputee wannabes or those seeking phone or cyber sex. Please drop me a note at **Cybermyke1@aol.com** (please mention ABLE-TOGETHER in the subject line so I won't mistake it for a spam) or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #330*.

LOS ANGELES/SoCAL. GWM 30, 5'6", 135 lbs, brn/brn, outgoing professional, interested in social causes, neuromuscular disorder since birth, use wheelchair, crutches; sincere, honest guy who likes to go swimming and sit out in the sun. Seek cute guy, disabled or nondisabled, who's interested in conversation, dinners, movies, sex and loving. Write with photo. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1518, or E-mail: PETERnLA@aol.com*



THE REAL THING. I'm a friendly, down-to-earth, 34 year-old GWM, looking for a longterm romantic relationship with a compatible guy. You share my love of movies, and might also be interested in theater, science fiction, history, politics, or psychology. I love to hug, kiss and cuddle with my man; you're the same way. I'm attractive, HIV-neg., a nonsmoker, 5'7", 135 lbs., moderately disabled—walk with crutches, go for walks in my cool new power 'chair. You are roughly 25-45, any race, attractive, intelligent, HIV-neg., also a nonsmoker. Local preferred, but—who knows! *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #013, or E-mail: sfshyguy@aol.com*



CALIFORNIA. Handsome, funny, cuddly and charismatic Jewish disabled guy wants to meet men ages 21-45, disabled or not, for correspondence, friendship, romance, or whatever happens. Short, bespectacled, hairy, and compact, with dark hair and eyes, I am



equally comfortable with many different kinds of food, music, movies, theater, and people. Here is my photo; I would love to see a photo of you with your reply; but it isn't necessary. I am newly 34, but simultaneously feel much older and much younger; perhaps you feel the same way. Generally, I prefer people who are emotionally open, humorous, and compassionate, although none of these qualities rules out a healthy streak of sarcasm. I also hope to meet people who can accept and encompass my disability in its full context rather than singling it out for special attention. Get in touch and let's see what might develop. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #895, or E-mail: CyranoEB@yahoo.com* Hope to hear from you...

SAN DIEGO AREA. Shy GWM, post-polio with leg brace, younger looking 53, 5'11", 200lbs, hazel eyes, likes nude fun and SM/BD games indoors and out. Enjoy quiet evenings at home, dinner out, travel, etc. Interested in meeting guys, disabled or not, for friendship, pen pals, safe sex. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #137.*

NE CALIFORNIA AREA. 50-something GWM seeking correspondence with all who reply. Goodlooking, so I've been told, gregarious/altruistic by nature/disposition. HIV-negative. Enjoy/use only safe sex practices. Live in High Desert. Clean shaven, shaven head—not skin head. 6'4", 210 lbs., looking for similar like-minded significant other candidates. *Micheal George Cordes, Post Office Box 1041, Bishop, CA 93515-1041.*

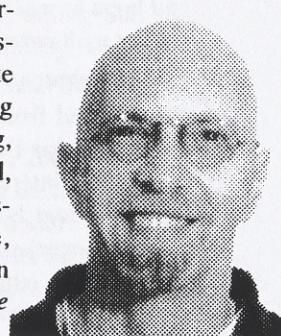
CA

SAN FRANCISCO. 5'7", 145 lbs., youthful Baby Boomer with exotic blend of Hispanic-Eurasian good looks, clean cut, black hair, brown eyes, heart-warming smile, silky-smooth skin, health-conscious, HIV-negative, post-polio and wears a left leg brace. Busy, active social and work life, but open to a whole range of new connections—preferably in the Bay Area and Northern California region—for potential boyfriends, casual dates, sex buddies, intimate friendships, or just good company to hang out with. Wants companions who are caring, validating, intellectually and sexually stimulating, fun-loving, down to earth, stable and easy going. Has a broad range of interests, including people, character study, movies, the theatre, dinners out, travel, sightseeing, camping, nudity in nature, collector car shows, flea markets and occasional dancing and nightlife, as well as writing, reading, politics, psycho-babble, sci-fi, penpals, gardening, some TV and long quiet lazy weekends shacked up with the right guy. Interested or at least curious? Let's meet over coffee and see what happens. Drop a note with phone number (and recent photo a plus) to: *Robby, POB 14104, San Francisco, CA 94114-4104.*

CALIFORNIA. GWM 61, weigh 225#, 5'8", very hirsute. I moved to LA from NYC after teaching American history in high school for more than 25 years. I have MS and am wheelchair-bound. I am loving and outgoing. I am looking for friendship, preferably with someone younger. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #436.*



PLACE IN THE SUN. Fair-complected white jewish male, nondisabled, healthy, attractive and athletic 48 year old professional. I'm well kept and in good shape, a hairy, muscular 5'10"/165# with nice chest and arms, bald/shaved head, blond goatee. A beer or glass of wine with dinner, no smokes/drugs, HIV-neg. I am warm, caring, decent, stable, intelligent, honest and straightforward. Would like to hear from disabled or nondisabled man interested in good connection...intimate friendship...travel...dating...hanging out...sharing place in the sun. I like talking on the phone, cooking, laughing, hanging out, eating together, Seinfeld, Simpsons, fringe theater, movies, working out, physical affection. I like men who are affectionate, adventurous, athletic-within-ability, 25-50. San Francisco/UK/beyond. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #252.*



OAKLAND. I'm Don Marx, 52, GWM, tall, HIV-neg., buddhist and able. As a community activist and high school and adult ed teacher of 25+ years, I am drawn to new friendships and companionships with gay men who are impaired, to whatever physical limitations. For I know with a compassionate and open heart, I can learn and experience the joy of living and participating with members of this group. I have watched and helped children and adults who are not able to accomplish everything they dreamed of and now as a friend, I want to learn more. I hope, that with others, able and not, I can together, expand my humanity and offer touch, a smile and warm feelings. So, I look forward to sharing time, sharing voices, sharing conversations—all I need is guidance along the way, and in turn, I am there. I am also open to be a friend for a movie and travel buddy to see the sites of the Bay Area. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1811, or ph: 510 530 1319 or E-mail: compeace@concentric.net*

CALIFORNIA. GWM 51, 5'6", 145#, blu, br, 'stache, 18 years hemiplegic wheelchair user, eager for So. Ca. friends, nondisabled or not. I am a former hotel manager and now do AIDS volunteer work. I enjoy life, lite-health cooking, dining, conversations, classical music, opera, movies, theaters, museums, etc...Drink wine but not into bars or scene, do not smoke or do drugs. Be discreet. *Tom, 1525 Appleton #302, Long Beach, CA 90802, ph: 562 436 2880.*

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA. GWM 51, 5' 6", 155 lbs, polio survivor and cane user, iso black or dark-complexioned GM. Want to add zest to my life and having a man in my arms who truly wants to be there brings a sparkle to my eyes and a smile to my face. I lead an active and busy life, so when I stop, I'm tired. I'm looking for someone who is fairly quiet, gentle—shy ok—who desires to connect on a physical and emotional level ranging from occasional dates to sex buddy, boyfriends, soul-mates—let's let the connection between us decide where we go. I neither offer nor expect physical perfection, but hope for chemistry. I'm emotional, sometimes sad, but mostly level-headed and very stable: "walking the talk" is what I offer you, and hope to receive. Please call 415—621 2938 before 9 pm PDT, or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #1224.*

CALIFORNIA. Hi—I'm Bret, a tall, goofy Farm-boy type guy transplanted from the Midwest to San Francisco back in the 80's. Turned 40 this December 1998, Capricorn/Year of the Dog for anyone who is interested in that kind of stuff. SGWM, 6'3", 210, with dark hair and blue/green eyes, boyish face, usually clean shaven except on weekends when I can get a little scruffy. HIV-negative, but that isn't a requirement. Semi-disabled with ruptured/herniated discs, muscle and nerve damage in lower back and legs, has been

progressing for twenty years, may get worse as time goes on. Have some limitations, but do what I can. Love trips to Disneyland, music, books, movies, Mystery Science Theater 3000, walks/hikes, crafts, lots of other things. More of a romantic, love to cuddle under the blankets when it's cold and raining out with a good (or cheesey) movie on the VCR and someone nice to hold. Looking for pen pals, friends, dates, LTR with other able or disabled man in San Francisco or anywhere. Also looking to start studying ASL again, and would like to hear from others who use ASL or have studied or like to study—maybe take courses together? Prefer guys between late twenties and late forties, N/S, N/D, if possible (but not mandatory). Kind of shy at first, but open, honest, friendly and funny once I get to know a person. Photo/Phone appreciated. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1667.*

CALIFORNIA. GWM 45, 5'7", 180#, legally disabled 1989 w. atypical facial pain & major depression. Average to good looks, short brown greying hair and hazel eyes. I am clean and honest and live on a limited income. I enjoy b/w vintage film and like to mountain bike to nearest coffee shop. I would like to get out of my apartment and see nature—perhaps travel and see your part of the world. It's much more fun when you can share life's experiences with someone. *David Martin, 203 Neds Way, Tiburon, CA 94920.*

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Charlie, 55, 6', 180 lbs, blond/blue, mild heart condition, seeking companion to enjoy each other's company; interests—conversation, movies, travel, quiet times. SS. Possible LTR. Please be sincere. No drugs. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1455.*

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. Post-Polio quadriplegic wheelchair-user, young 39 years old GLM counselor, 5'4", 135lbs, black hair, brown eyes, clean shaven, non-smoker, HIV-negative, with fabulous sense of humor. Wants to date non-disabled guys 25-40ish, especially Latinos and Asians, to share my enjoyment of movies, live theater, music (jazz, R&B, salsa, merengue, reggae), dining out, the internet, intellectual conversations, tenderness, intimacy, and good sex. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #392, or ph: 415 272 2536, or E-mail: JLS@SIRIUS.COM*

CALIFORNIA. I'm a middle-aged GWM, 5'10", 200 lbs., using crutches occasionally when my ankle flares up. I am seeking a young man, disabled or nondisabled, preferably under 40, for friendship/romance/possible relationship. My interests include classical music, movies, museums, dining out. *Michael, POB 4054, Berkeley, CA 94704.*

CA



COLORADO. Early retired GWM, N/S, N/D, teddy bear type guy with clipped beard, hairy, is looking for LTR, handicapped or not, Into antiques, thrift store, flea market, classic cars, concerts, off-beat film, trips and you. Looking for sane same who is interested in not being alone, has some income, and not into gay lifestyle. *Occupant, POB 38471, Colorado Springs, CO 80937.*

COLORADO. Toothless Boytoy or Mantoy. Spanish/German GWM with CP, ambulatory, 49 years young, salt & pepper, beard & mustache, brown eyes, 5'4", 130 lbs, HIV-neg. I want to meet stable, healthy, talentedly-oral "Daddy-type" GWMS, nondisabled and disabled, 30-60 yrs. I have a lot to offer the right goodlooking deserving man. You must meet my requirements as I must meet yours. Positive responses gets positive results. Interested GWMS please write with photo (returned upon request) and I will send you mine. Look forward to some good times. Thank you. *Mr. Luis Perez, 1955 Arapahoe Street #806, Denver, CO 80202-1834, or ph: 303 291 0806.*

DELAWARE. Hi! My name is Frank Veasey, 37 year old disabled GWM, 5' 11" tall, brown hair, blue eyes, 200 lbs. ISO pen-pals, disabled or not. Also ISO LTR with nondisabled male, 25-35 preferred. I'm caring, honest, fun, loving. *Frank Veasey, POB 838, Bear, DE 19701-0838.*



FLORIDA. 43 year old disabled bear with cp, br/bl 5' 1" (not a typo), 175 pounds, use a cane for walking and a wheelchair for long distance, looking for a stable relationship with love and romance: am on disability so relocation is not a problem if we are compatible; love warm weather—especially Hawaii—love to travel read and learn about computer stuff. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #256.*

FLORIDA. GWM 42, 6', 200 lbs, br(br, nondisabled, in search of GWM 20-50 disabled who walks with crutches. I am an honest, caring, trustworthy male who is seeking to welcome new friends into my life. All correspondence will be answered. *Michael Kirnard, 1025 N. Thorpe Ave., Orange City, FL 32763.*



ILLINOIS. Nondisabled GWM 62, 6', 188#, blond, short beard, non-smoker, HIV-neg. Want to meet a monogamous partner with or without disabilities, especially in San Francisco, Ca. I'm affectionate, quiet, like French food/wine, vitamins/herbs, felines, gardening, spirituality. *Harold R. Schuring, 300 N. State Street, #5718, Chicago, IL 60610, or ph: 312 670 3507.*

ILLINOIS. GWM 35, 170#, brown hair, grey eyes, HIV-negative, like fishing, camping, hiking, bowling, movies, dancing, travel and eating out. Looking for friendship or relationship. *John Nowack, 1536—4th Street Ct. E., Milan, IL 61624-3416*, or ph: 309 756 3743.

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ILLINOIS. GWM, nondisabled, is attracted to and interested in corresponding with and meeting guys who wear leg braces, also guys wearing teeth braces. *Terry Troutman, POB 1107, Arlington Heights, IL 60006-1107*, or E-mail: **DTIRR@AOL.COM**

ILLINOIS. Half Polynesian Gay Male, black hair, brown eyes, 03/20/62, 180 lbs., 5'10 1/2", alcohol/drug free. Bipolar Disorder. Animal lover—I have two cats. I like cross-bike riding, computers and True Crime Stories. I'm a Nudist. I have pen-pals in different countries. I'm shy at first, but have a quirky (or kinky) sense of humor. Like to exchange photos. *Dana Kiger, 214 E. 7th. St. Apt. #215, Gibson City, IL 60936*, or ph: 512 833 6104,

or visit <http://homepage.USR.com/d/danaandrews> or E-mail: **DANAKIGER@juno.com**

NORTHERN KENTUCKY. Abled GM, young 50, 5'1", 125 lbs, brown hair, blue eyes, 'stache, glasses. Smoker, light drinker. Interests—music, dancing, long walks, swimming, intelligent tv, old movies, quiet nights at home. Race/disability friendly, seek same, height-weight proportionate. Your photo gets mine. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #765.*

MARYLAND. GWM, mature, hairy, 6ft, blue/brown-gray, 205lbs. Life-long attraction to GMs with one leg shorter than the other or club foot or limp, also polio survivors. I am truthful, loving, monogamous and considerate. I like antiques, classical music & opera, cooking, travel, loving home in beautiful environment. My handicap is a short penis with small, mis-mated balls. Pen pals appreciated. Contact: *John, 1110 Fidler Lane #801, Silver Spring, MD 20910*, or ph. 301 589 1873.

MASSACHUSSETTS. I have been an amputee (right arm AE) for most of my life (car accident when I was 23). Being an amputee has been a challenge but not a limitation. Learning to love my body has taken some time, but I'm there now and I have been trying to take good care of it by exercising regularly. As a result I'm in excellent physical condition—57, 5'11", 150 hard lbs, light brown hair, short beard, HIV-neg. I'm well educated and teach biology at a small college. My interests range from nature to sports cars. Living on Cape Cod all summer, I manage to spend a great deal of time on the beach and I love to sunbathe in the nude. Through this

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Magazine I have learned that there is much for me to share with both fellow amputees and those who are attracted to us. I'm interested in corresponding/meeting/visiting other upper-extremity amputees and "devotees". Let's enjoy each other. **E-mail: tfileau@capecod.net** or write: *Ted, POB 1175, N. Eastham, MA 02651.*

MICHIGAN. Nondisabled GWM, 6', 180 lbs, would like to meet/correspond with guys who are amputees and/or wear dentures. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #799.*

MICHIGAN. GWM, 37 years old, 6'2", 225lbs, semi hairy, brown hair and eyes and a goatee. My disability (which I dont see as one, btw) is epilepsy, rather severe when uncontrolled, but currently and for many years under excellent control. I have some other medical stuff too but nothing serious and I don't live life out of a disability frame of mind, I just see myself as normal. As far as work, I deliver flowers part time while attending school to be a bodyworking therapist...Massage, acupressure, craniosacral, myofacial release, and polarity work...I was a Goldsmith/jeweler/stonesetter for about 17 years before my divorce. I am a Gay man with a deep rooted faith in God. I enjoy cooking, remodeling and decorating, floral arranging, singing karaoke, fixing computers and putting on the 'net. I'm looking for a guy, preferably in his 30's, nondisabled or disabled, to talk to, cuddle with, hopefully leading to LTR. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1845, or E-mail: kc8hps@net-link.net*

NEBRASKA. GWM, SCI: para, 41, 6', 175 lbs, HIV-neg., seeking contacts, email buddies, friends...Maybe more later? Interests are music (Blues, Country, Soul esp.), reading (Anne Rice, Cyberpunk, SF, escapist trash, gay socio-politics, so I don't sound like a cultural infidel), travel and exercise. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1778, or E-mail: berdache@inetnebr.com*

NEW HAMPSHIRE. GWM, 50, 6', 185 lbs, reddish hair (some grey), blue eyes, big red mustache, nondisabled, honest, sincere, kind. I love the country and mountains; I collect and restore Victorian antiques, and have a business making custom crutches out of woods such as rosewood and ebony. I am attracted to men who are amputees. Looking to hear from an amputee, and from others abled and disabled, with a view to friendship, maybe more. Photo and phone # appreciated. *Ed Openshaw, POB 65, Rumney, NH 03266, ph: 603 786 9922.*

NEW JERSEY. Outgoing, energetic, dynamic, nondisabled 48 yo GWM, 5'10", HIV-neg., with brown hair and hazel eyes, seeks the joy and pleasure of meeting a young, body-building, above-knee amputee for creative friendship. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1229.*



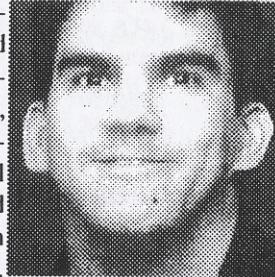
NEW JERSEY. GBM, 30, 5'5", 130 lbs., br(br, clean shaven, healthy and in shape. I am handsome, intelligent, educated, honest, spiritual, warm and loving. Despite a mild form of cerebral palsy, I am very active. I enjoy exercise, music, movies, dancing, cooking, and quiet times cuddling with the one I love. Although I am open to new friendships I am seeking a monogamous relationship with a similar trustworthy GM of any race, age 25-45, with strong values, who wants to build a home. He must be financially secure, healthy, emotionally secure, drug/alcohol free, open-minded and non-possessive. I prefer a gentleman who is able-bodied or mildly disabled. Please respond with address, photo and phone. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1321.*

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NEW JERSEY. GWM 34, 5'10", 170 lbs. "As Good As It Gets." Have had Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) for 19 years, for which I receive SSD. I enjoy hugs, affection, touching, holding and being held, watching TV and movies, driving, traveling, humor, gay events/meetings, talking on the 'phone, swimming pools, singing, and my cat, Brownie. I am seeking a loving friendship, and a long-term relationship. I am pretty liberal and have Christian beliefs. I don't smoke or drink and prefer you be the same. I prefer a good-looking man with a pretty hairy chest and arms, but clean shaven. I like men 21-48, HIV-neg., caring, honest, trustworthy, very affectionate, romantic, easygoing and sensitive. Can relocate for the right person. Please include recent photo. Call or write. *Jeff Woerner, POB 7049, Plainfield, NJ 07060-0799, or ph: 908 769 3665. God bless you.*



NORTHERN NEW JERSEY. Partially disabled, ambulatory, heavy GWM looking for LTR. Me: 50, 6 feet tall, 265 lbs, dark brown eyes, hair, beard and moustache, HIV-Negative. I can't go up or down stairs and I need help getting up from a chair and out of a car. Other than that, I'm cool. I have an excellent "up" attitude. I'm a lot of fun to be with. I love to laugh, cuddle and snuggle. I'm a first class cuddler (a real Teddy Bear!). I'm very tactile. I love to touch and be touched. Some of my interests are: classical music, museums, books, bookstores, shopping, restaurants, movies, videos and stamp collecting. You: abled GWM 32-55, HIV-Negative, build can be slim, average, wiry or muscular, in the Greater New Jersey/Manhattan Metropolitan Area. Some similar likes would be great, but not essential. Be strong for me, buddy. Letter and photo get mine. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #613.*



NEW YORK. GAM 25, 110#, bilateral amputee (b/k) who walks with a cane, seeks friendships, mutual support, and fun times. I love music, hot baths, and the arts. If you're into LIFE or just want to hang out, then please write. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1788 or voice-mail: 917 826 1710.*

NEW YORK. Cuddly GWM 57, 5'10", 175#, HIV-neg., short dark brown hair, gray-trimmed beard, hairy chest, arms and legs, masculine, down to earth, attractive, professional. I have a moderate case of Tourette's Syndrome, which causes vocalizations and tics. However I have enough control over the vocalizations that I can go to the theater and enjoy most of what life has to offer. Besides the TS, I'm slightly disabled by spondylolisthesis. I can't run a marathon, but I can still get around almost as well as anyone else. In addition I wear diapers for mild incontinence and a breathing mask when I sleep for a mild case of sleep apnea. I know that some guys are into the handicapped. That's fine. You can enjoy my disabilities and abilities. Anything goes that is safe and mutually agreeable. Let's get together and explore the possibilities whether it be for friendship, an erotic interlude, or a long-term relationship. *Don, POB 885, General Post Office, Brooklyn, NY 11202, or ph: 718 624 5029, or E-mail: brooklyn@prodigy.net*

NYC. I'm Frank, 25 y.o., friendly, sensitive, vivacious, extroverted, and fun. One friend has described me as "Whitmanesque," which is flattering since Whitman is my poetic idol. I'm an unabashed

Romantic, in the sense that I love nature, the expression of emotion, exercise of the imagination, and especially rebellion against social conventions. I'm an involved queer activist, a newspaper columnist, and graduate student. I have arthritis in most of my joints which causes noticeable stiffness and occasional pain, but I do live very independently. I am looking to meet RELATIONSHIP oriented guys (mid 20's to mid 30's) who are similarly Romantic and extroverted. Let's explore the arts, read poetry, see films, go to museums and theater, cook, laugh, and LIVE. If all you want is sexual contact, I won't be interested. But, I will be interested if you're willing to invest the time to help something really wonderful develop. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1802, or E-mail: fs94@columbia.edu*



NEW YORK. GWM, 44, 5'11", 155 lbs, good youthful muscular looks, swimmer's body, brown hair, hazel eyes, multilingual, nondisabled; interested in travel, reading, music from opera to house, and cooking; seeking disabled friend, 25-45,—especially if you are Arab, Indian or Latino. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #278.*

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NEW YORK. Hi! My name is Doug, a GWM 49, 5'11", 165-170 lbs, HIV-, with very slight cerebral palsy. I'm looking for a guy with or without a disability in age range 35-50. After work I'm into the performing arts, concerts, ballets, opera, lectures, and so on. I do not let my handicap keep me from doing the things I like or want to do but I want to meet the right guy to fill the other void in my life. Please be disease-free and a non-smoker. If you are interested send 'phone and photo to: *POB 275, Bronx, NY 10461.*

NEW YORK. GWM 28, 5'8", 155, br;br, playwright, college-educated, wheelchair user, fit and healthy, looking to meet new friends and possible relationship with a nondisabled or disabled guy who is smart, funny and kind. My interests include theatre, film, politics, psychology and good conversation. NYC area and under 35 a plus, but all are welcome. *John. Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1604, or E-mail: thepoodle@aol.com*

ADIRONDACK REGION. GWM 39, 5' 9", 150 lbs. Brown hair and eyes, clean-cut, phy. fit (as much as dis. allows), am told I am attractive but you can't always believe what you hear. I have several dis. Part. deaf, lost most use of left hand and wear a brace most of the time, have nerve degeneration going on with legs. Most days life is okay. Have learned how to survive alone in the country. I presently live at the gateway to the Adirondacks and am trying to start a business of my own—campgrounds for the dis. and seniors. No money but have a vision. I am presently single and live alone except for my two dogs. I am 12 miles from the nearest town (Lowville, NY) on 14 acres of family owned land. I enjoy gardening of all kinds, outdoor fun, hunting, fishing, camping, traveling occ., family, friends, and being part of my community. I live life to the fullest and am always willing to try anything at least once. I like quiet times at home, going out occ. I drink occ. and smoke both cigs. (trying to quit) and other occ. I am on SSD and live a very conservative life because of that. You should be GM under 40 (but will write all). Race and dis. are not important. You must be willing to relocate to my area. Should enjoy some of the same things I do. You should be open, honest, caring, willing to share whatever life deals out, and be part of my vision in whatever way you can. Be understanding, patient, considerate and trustworthy. Please write with photo. to Daniel. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1731.*

NEW YORK/elsewhere. Hi! I am 63 years old. I had rheumatic fever as a child, which caused heart problems. The last time around, 12 years ago, I had a stroke. I couldn't talk. Now I can talk a little better. I'm so glad I'm busy working: I direct plays in the theatre. Often I am traveling to work in Atlanta, California, Europe, etc. I would like to meet mature men. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1760.*

NEW YORK CITY. Hi, my name is Alan. A NYC native, I'm 32 years old, 6'2", 180 lbs., dark brown hair, brown eyes, very good looking. I have Body Dysmorphic Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, very mild Tourette's Syndrome, Essential Tremor, and I am recovering from alcoholism. I am a graduate student in museum studies/art history and have two other art-related degrees. I work as an art and antiques dealer. I collect books and ephemera and enjoy the flea market, thrift shops and museums. I'm interested in disability issues and am a volunteer with the National Lesch-Nyhan Disease Registry. I'm not very interested in movies and TV. I am seeking a goodlooking, intelligent, disabled or nondisabled M up to 39 years old. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1553, or ph: 212 989 1724.*

NEW YORK. Goodlooking GWM 40, nondisabled. I work in the arts and travel frequently. I am looking for disabled male friends for fun and whatever that may lead to. Guys ages 20-50 - perhaps with wheelchair, braces, post-polio - all welcomed. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #384.*

NEW YORK. Attractive, nondisabled w/m with Daddy Bear looks and attitude, 50 yrs., 6', 275 lbs, mostly white beard and moustache, close-cropped hair, hairy body, piercings and tats, and the imagination to go beyond a partner's physical limitations. Long time disability activist interested in meeting men with a wide range of disabilities/differences. Enjoy guys comfortable with the idea that I could be attracted to them and their disabilities. But also love exchanging thoughts with guys new to being an object of desire. Got a long-term lover, but still seeking like-minded guys who I can share ideas, fantasies, fetishes, and yes, some rewarding one-on-one contacts with. Non-sexual interests include writing, theatre, costume design, crafts, music (Broadway to Bach, but little Rock). A body is a terrible thing to waste. Let's not be put off by our differences, let's revel in them!. Call Max at 718 852 1960 or E-mail: **BKBearMax@aol.com** or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #919.*

NEW YORK CITY. GWM, nondisabled, 40, 185, 6', very handsome with classic Mediterranean good looks, clean shaven, masculine, intelligent professional, muscular, gym-fit, HIV-neg., sensitive, stable, affectionate, easygoing and emotionally secure. For as long as I can remember I have always been strongly attracted to physically "different" types of guys. Looking to meet men to explore safe mutual sexual good times and more. Call 212 595 5755 or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #287.*

NORTH CAROLINA. GWM 33, blond hair, blue eyes, nondisabled, iso GWM 30—50 disabled, professional for friendship/relationship. Prefer chair user or lower extremity disability but open to

all. Southerner who enjoys travel, going out or quiet times at home. Looking for a caring, honest, open man willing to explore life. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1601.*

**ABLE
TOGETHER**
PERSONALS

I LIVE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH CAROLINA.

Nondisabled male, 62, 6'1", 220 lbs, gray hair, hazel eyes, hairy chest; I'm attracted to disabled men; I'm retired and travel a great deal, and would love to hear from you wherever you are. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #508.*

NORTH DAKOTA. Walt here, and I'm still lost out on the Dakota prairie. I was hatched here in 1952 (do the math), but escaped in 1970 and went to college in L.A. and Seattle. Most of the '70s were spent globetrotting with a gospel (sort of)-jazz/rock band. My MS surfaced while I was on the road in Europe back in 1973. After a year off, touring resumed until health said "no more." Following careers from graphics designer to public relations, I ended up back in ND. Although health keeps me fairly sedentary, politics and disabil-

ity issues keep me active. I am now a freelance writer for various periodicals, and my book, "I've Fallen and I Still Can't Get Up," a commentary on disability, will be released next summer by Champion Press, Beverly Hills. When occasionally not in the wheelchair, I stand at 5'9" and tip the scale at 160#. Obviously, my salt and pepper crew cut is fast becoming history, but I do sport a trimmed

'stache. Despite growing up in an evangelical-fundamentalist home, my spiritual journey has taken me elsewhere. Interests exclude dope, tobacco, too much booze, and "political correctness;" interests include politics, music from opera to Elton, intelligent conversation and meeting someone of like mind. If you connect with any of the above, let's communicate: *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1295 or E-mail: wdudley@pop.ctctel.com*

CLEVELAND, OHIO. GWM born 1941, 5' 8", 140#, brown/blue; diagnosis—MS; currently attempting to get better control of the following symptoms: walking difficulty, bladder and sexual dysfunction; personal interests: history, especially of Cleveland/Northern Ohio & Great Lakes areas, movies, trains, transit, historic preservation, naturism, gay male erotica. I am back in my home town after a career elsewhere, on extended medical leave prior to retirement. Always willing to hear from A-T subscribers in NE Ohio or visitors to our area. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #617.*



NY

OH

LOOKIN' FOR MY SOUL MATE... Oregon. Hi, I'm a groovy personality with an awakening soul. My name is John, I'm 30, 5'4",



150#, and love to stay physically active. I'm pretty high functioning with an incomplete T-12 spinal cord injury of 10 years. I love being outdoors, boating, bicycling, music, travel, metaphysics and trying to find the "right" colors and plants for the house. I'm looking to talk with other guys, disabled and gay, around the country. I'm also looking to meet a swell guy (disabled or non) prefer under 35 and close to Portland for friendship and a long term relationship.

Some things I appreciate in other guys are a lively sense of humor, curiosity, optimism and a sense of adventure. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1724, or E-mail: Mupper24@aol.com*

SEEKING COMPANIONSHIP. Gay Jewish Disabled White Male 51, 5'6", seeks GWM friend ages 40 to 60 (or thereabouts) for companionship/relationship. Intelligent, active in community affairs, disability and gay rights, attuned to progressive politics, and work in professional position. Have blond silky hair, trimmed gray beard, moderately hairy chest. Interests include reading, museums, travel, serious movies, international affairs, politics and photography. Enjoy country-western and folk music and dancing. Can do modified form of two-step couple dancing and enjoy traditional East European, Balkan, and Israeli music and dancing. Am hard of hearing and have Cerebral Palsy. Use hearing aids and cane. Cannot drive, but can use regular public transportation to get around independently. Enjoy attending folk music concerts with progressive political bent that are interpreted in American Sign Language. Non-smoker. No drugs. Knowledge of ASL, or willingness to learn, a plus. Alan. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1762.*

PENNSYLVANIA. GWM 39 years old with a swimmer's build, 5'9", 125 lbs, with cerebral palsy. I am masculine and cute. I have my college



degree in theatre. I already wrote a play and it was staged at Penn State University in the main campus. Believe me - I don't let my disability stand in my way of anything or anybody. I live on my own, one hour away from Philadelphia and one hour away from New York City. My interests are the theatre, working out at the gym, dancing, going to the beach in the summer, laying in the sun to get a dark tan without a tan line, partying, going to see male dancers, and traveling. Believe me, I do everything and

anything. I am looking for someone to be with to enjoy life and to have a blast with. And... Hey, is there any guy out there who wants to take a vacation? Please contact me if you do. I was thinking about going to one of the islands, just lay out on the beach in our bikinis and look at the view. *Bill Lasch, 1101 Seneca Street #208, Bethlehem, PA 18015, ph: 610 866 4679.*

PENNSYLVANIA. Good guy, 39, 5'11", 165#, brown hair and eyes, good-looking, masculine, solid, nondisabled. Personable, casual, unconventional, active, affectionate. Enjoy music, the outdoors, movies, sports, exercise, good food, good conversation, good books, and good times. Have positive, sincere, lifelong interest in men with disabilities, particularly upper extremity amputees and survivors of SCI, polio or spina bifida who use crutches. Maybe it's the athletic aspect of the upper body, my thoughts on intimacy and disability, discovering him whom others may overlook...Now I am embracing this interest and seeing where it leads me: I'm more than happy to explore and explain with the right guy. I hope to offer a high degree of awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to a disabled man to see what we can enjoy or build together. Have dated a few men with disabilities and all was ok. If you like what you hear and the above seems to fit, please be in touch. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1428 or ph: 215 829 9650.*

PENNSYLVANIA. Attractive, well-educated GWM 26, 5'8", 125, brown hair and eyes, neat and clean. I was born with spastic athetoid cerebral palsy which affects my speech, gait and fine motor control. I am ambulatory, but use a power wheelchair for distance. I enjoy computers, the Internet, AOL, travel, theater, Disability Issues and Rights, reading, meeting new people and sex. I am an active member of both ADAPT and the Philadelphia Rowing Program for the Disabled. Sexually, I am extremely open-minded, tend to prefer more of a submissive role, and have a strong interest in other men who have disabilities. Please feel free to write, call or email me. *Brian Peaceman, 150 N Bethlehem Pike #C-110, Ambler, PA 19002, ph: 215 540 0411 before 10pm EST, or E-mail: BPeaceman@aol.com*

PENNSYLVANIA. GWM (8/5/55), sincere, warm, caring, intelligent, humorous, can be shy, Leo, others tell me I'm a handsome bear, dark hair, beard/stache, blue eyes, hairy back-butt-legs, person with a disability, power wheelchair user, HIV-neg., the fixed-income thing. I seek friendships and possibly more, mutual support, hugs, kissing, safe times. I enjoy music, computers, surfing the Internet, E-mail, videos, houseplants, volunteering, hanging out on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania & at their botanical garden & bio-pond, and appreciating the great view from my secure 19th floor apartment. I do not smoke and don't use drugs and have no interest in sports. *Clark WF, 3901 Market St. #1913, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3131, or E-mail: clarkwf@ix.netcom.com or clarkwf@juno.com*



OR

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PA

SOUTH DAKOTA. Hello, my name is Tom, I'm a 38 year old GWM, 5'11", 155lbs, brown, blue quadriplegic from an auto acc. in 1984. I'm a "struggling" writer ;o) Write poetry occasionally, nothing published yet. I'm into wheelchair Olympics. My cute puppy keeps me happy, Gordon Setter. I'm an x sailor and into mechanics on Helicopters. I smoke and don't care if you do. Prefer any friends to be pen-pals first, then looking for LTR. Age is no preference but must be honest and open to advice. Looking for friends to spend time with same interests, ie—outdoors, camping, fishing, watching movies by a fire, dining out, most music from the 70s—80s. Sincere, dependable. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #412, or E-mail: TBak301048@aol.com*

TENNESSEE. GWM 43, 6' 2", 140 lbs, likes to read, write, clock-repair, wood-carving, plants, also love great old movies and chess, and good conversations about trivial facts, inactive lawyer on SSI after complete knee replacement, consider self nondisabled, drinking problem (want to be honest)—iso wheelchair using men for friendship and possibly more. Write and send a picture. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #952.*

TEXAS. Bisexual white man, date of birth April 1942, brown gray hair, hazel eyes, 5' 8", 180 lbs, HIV-neg. I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder followed by persistent personality change and Sleep Disorder. I also have Sugar Diabetes Mellitus, Type II. I want what is hard to find: an emotional and sexual relationship with a Bi. man and a Bi. woman/ a Bi. man and myself to share two Bi. women, and each other together. Full knowledge and consent of all. First get to know each other in friendship and then let it happen. (Nickname: Comanche.) Please write to: *J.C., 2500 Nonesuch Road #7D, Abilene, TX 79606-1512.*

TEXAS. GWM 51, brown/hazel, 5'0", 131 lbs, HIV-neg., smoke, alcohol & drug free (12 yrs. recovery), seeking friendship, cuddling, safe sex, giggles, & perhaps love; but no wedding rings. I'm not into penpals or telephone friendships. From old polio I have scoliosis (spine curves to right), a hump on right side of back and an underdeveloped left shoulder—also slight, seasonal asthma. I'm handsome, mischievously sexual, and fit. I question authority—my own, as well as others'—and I'm playfully irreverent. I'm a community college professor, professionally secure and financially comfortable. I love music: R&R, big band & classical (baroque to 20th c), astrology (student for 20+ years), *X-Files, Cops, America's Most Wanted*, antiques, bookstores, conversation, low fat dining, light exercise, Monopoly, Scrabble and old b&w movies. Please be: able to travel (as I am) should we decide to meet. Also be: DD and



smoke free, sensitive, fun, fit within your ability, willing to try things you haven't, possibly a polio survivor and/or an amputee, or even physically normal. Photo gets mine. *Billy Roberts, ph: 512 385 8313, or replies with correct postage please to A-T #956.*

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TEXAS. Clean cut, GWM, 40s, 5'10", 165, able bodied, very interested in meeting new friends. I often find myself attracted to guys with physical disabilities. I travel a great deal (especially So. California and major cities), so location isn't as important as a sharing of mutual interests. I enjoy the performing and fine arts, classical music, architectural history, good food/wine with an interesting guy. My favorite countries to visit are France and Italy, but am open to new experiences. Let's have dinner (please be a non-smoker), explore our interests and perhaps plan an adventure! I look forward to hearing from you soon. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1420, or E-mail: Brooks346@aol.com*

TEXAS FARM BOY. Country kid seeks LTR with a down-to-earth abled country or city boy. GWM 60, good natured, physically fit, college educated and very masculine. 5'10", 170#, blond hair, blue eyes, hairy, fair complexion, HIV-neg., and no drugs ever. I consider myself highly spirited, physically active, virile, very sensual/sexual and affectionate. My disability is very moderate and invisible. I have a congenital eye problem and wear glasses for good correction. Also have a low-back problem L-4/L-5 that prevents heavy lifting. Otherwise in excellent health and good shape. My friends say I'm a bit rough around the edges, unique and unconventional—yet always the gentleman. I am seeking a younger man, 30 to 45, possibly 50, attractive, slender/very trim, who is comfortable with self, respectful, very considerate, active, not consumed by material possessions, loyal honest and very sensual/sexual, HIV-neg. and drug-free, and seeking a sincere relationship based on love and trust with an older man. I am very willing to relocate for the right person. Your photo and 'phone # gets mine. *J. D., POB 221, Royse City, TX 75189.*



VIRGINIA, ALEXANDRIA. GWM 47, 5' 10" tall, 180#, brown hair and eyes, very hairy body, solid, nondisabled. Wishes to meet amputees for friendship and possibly more. *Michael Allen, POB 19435, Alexandria, VA 22320.*

VIRGINIA. I am a 53 year old disabled person, in a wheelchair, but not confined to it, due to diabetic neuropathy. All toes on both feet have been amputated. Had CVA in August—health now improving since I have become a vegetarian. My interests are Art—I paint; History—ancient to European renaissance; Music—any kind other

SD

VA

than Jazz and Hard Rock. I am 6'2", dirty blond/hazel, clean shaven, and my weight fluctuates between 250# and 300#. I like to hug and hold and give excellent full body massages. I am an avid movie buff and love animals. I am looking for a large, hairy, gentle giant type to visit me and look forward to an LTR. I love Europeans and am a confirmed Francophile. Canadian and Swiss also a definite plus, as is lumberjack type. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1543, or ph: 540-342 5859 between 9am and 11pm Eastern time.*



HOMEBASE SEATTLE, WA.

I know there is a great guy out there looking for someone he can spend quality time with! I'm truly interested in connecting with someone who is good to himself and those that he holds dear. I have been in long term relations with both a primary partner and long term friendships. I am a

GWM 42, 175 lbs, 6'2", light brown hair, blue/green eyes and have muscular dystrophy. I have worked in the PC/networking fields for the last 20+ years and now plan to travel throughout North America, Australia and Europe. I am interested in meeting new friends worldwide. I now work as a Webmaster for a traveler resource called **AbleTraveler.com** just getting off the ground. I am also interested in writing a book that focuses on disabled men: coming out stories, insights, successful relationships, &c. My preference in a mate is someone with a good sense of humor. It doesn't matter to me if you have a disability, small stature, small cock, or if you work or don't work. It's more important of me that you are happy with your life and what you contribute to the greater good. I use an electric wheelchair to get around. I love travel, theater, dining out or at home, or a concert. Give me a call, I would love to hear from you. *Dan Pierce, MSC 6756, POB 2428, Pensacola, FL 32513-2428, or ph: 206 619 1365 or e-mail: abletraveler@abac.com*

Why not send A-T a photo to be published with your ad?

LINCOLNSHIRE. UK guy seeks friends, penpals, maybe more...I have wide interests including writing, graphics, photography, and archive film. I am disabled and walk with crutches and leg braces or use a wheelchair. They tell me I am reasonably good-looking, I like to think I am caring, there is also a bit of a wild streak—will you help me find it? *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1820.*



MANCHESTER, ENGLAND. Hi, I'm Bill Naismith. I am young at heart: here is my photo—see for yourself! I'm 5'8", medium build, with short black hair and a 'tache. I had polio and walk with a pair of sticks. I'm looking to connect with butch males of any age. Happy to accommodate visitors at my home. Go on, drop me a line. *Bill Naismith, POB 42, Newton Le Willow, Warrington, WA3 2DA, UK, or ph: [UK]-0850 491 131*

**ABLE
TOGETHER**

PERSONALS

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UK**

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ANZ**

OXFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND. Friendly, intelligent, attractive nondisabled guy, 50ish but look much younger, iso disabled guys as penpals and friends. I like exchanging ideas and feelings, like kisses, cuddles and massage, want to make you happy. Do write. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1592.*

SOMERSET, ENGLAND. GWM 37, 5' 11", 130 lbs, straight-acting nonsmoker, low level spinal cord injury, wheelchair user, brown hair, hazel eyes, clean shaven. I wear hearing aids. Interests: wanting to live life to the full again. I live and breathe the countryside; I enjoy handcycling down country lanes, swimming, driving my car, visiting places of interest, reading, music, writing, computer, cinema. I just started my first job since my accident helping improve wheelchair public transport for the disabled and elderly. I have lost lots of friends since my accident, thus I need to find new ones that will accept and understand the way my disability affects me. Would like to hear from other people, disabled and nondisabled, pen pals and maybe more. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1594.*

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND. Good looking, fit, active wheelchair-user, 28, looking to explore and have physcial fun with other sexy looking wheelchair bound guys, hobbies include cycling, weight-training, countryside, cinema, enjoying life. *14 Abbey Lane, Edinburgh, EH8 8HH, UK or ph: [UK] - [0]131 468 0490*

PERTH, SCOTLAND. My name is Peter, I'm 43, heavy build, brown hair and clean shaven. Disability due to SCI last year. I'm mobile with walking sticks and my car helps too. My interests are varied and include reading, music, films. I'm looking for guys, disabled or able-bodied, for friendship and perhaps, with the right person, possibly more. I look forward to hearing from you. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1774, or E-mail: barking91@hotmail.com*

Why not send A-T a photo to be published with your ad?

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. Richard, 43 yo architect. I have Spinal Muscular Atrophy (Kugelberg and Welanders Syndrome) and would particularly like to correspond with other guys with this or similar neuro-muscular conditions—though anyone else is also welcome to write. I am still ambulant for most of the time, though becoming increasingly reliant on my wheelchair (manual, ultra light) for shopping and “long-haul” activities. My interests include theatre, opera, classical music (particularly choral—I sing!) and computers. I still socialize a bit on the gay scene here, though I often find access and standing around quite difficult. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1665 or E-mail: richpond@bigpond.com*

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA. Hi guys!! This is a new kid on the Australian block, who I am disabled. But I have a good lifestyle that I live alone. Happy as a single gay person. Speaking with my disabilities, mind you, which I have two, these are: Moderate-severe Athetoid Cerebral Palsy and profoundly hearing loss, these affected since I was born with. Now I'm 20 years old, healthy (non-smoker, non-drinker and drug-free), honest, clean-shaven, 170cm (about) 65kgs, blond hair and brown eyes, who also have a slim body. I am living in a quiet area in Sydney's West. I am a college (TAFE) student, studying Information Technology Certificate IV (Multimedia). I can walk, however only limited distance. Communicate to you that I am using my hearing aids. What sort of guy you like? you may ask me. Well—I don't judge about age range and appearances. It is important to judge what is a man's personality. Able-bodied or disabled guys is fine with me. Hobbies and interests? Love nature, reading, quiet nights, enjoying bushwalking, photography, landscapes, computers and new things in life. Love to hear from you anywhere in the world. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1725, or email: marchibald@one.net.au*

SMILE, PLEASE!

When submitting your ad, we encourage you to send a photo of yourself to be printed with it. Remember, though: Our printing budget does not permit reproduction of the highest quality, so if your photo is poor quality to begin with, you're liable to be disappointed with what you see. Oh, and one more thing: *Smile!* It really helps.

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phone: 713 523 1332 or email: james_e@iah.com

The Center for Disability Rights in Rochester, New York has begun monthly meetings of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered persons with disabilities. The Center is located at 41 Backus Street, Rochester, NY 14608. The group will get together from 5:00 PM—8:00 PM every third Wednesday of the month. Call Bruce Darling or Susan Stahl on 716 647-9257

ABLE-TOGETHER *Magazine*

is in its **sixth** year of publication. A-T is mailed to subscribers across the globe in January, April, July, and October and is sold at gay/progressive bookstores.

Editor **Bob Guter**, an amputee since age six, examines the impact of disability on men's lives and relationships.

A-T Magazine is its subscribers—who contribute letters, poems, opinions, artwork, articles and bulletin-board items to the magazine, and help with outreach locally.

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